

Message Text

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15

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 ISO-00 SAB-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01 IO-14

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PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 DRC-01

SSO-00 /144 W

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R 170810Z DEC 73

FM USINT CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4735

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 4046

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT EG LY IS

SUBJECT: REMARKS BY TASS OFFICIAL ON ME ISSUES

IN CONVERSATION WITH USINTOFF DECEMBER 15, DEPUTY TASS
DIRECTOR YEDRASHNIKOV REMARKED ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:

1. EGYPTIAN COS SHAZLI'S REPLACEMENT. YEDRASHNIKOV SAID
THAT MANY EGYPTIAN OFFICERS BOTH BELOW SHAZLI AND ABOVE
(I.E., AHMAD ISMAIL) ATTRIBUTED DIRECTLY TO HIM THE FAILURE
OF THE EGYPTIAN ARMY TO CONTAIN THE ISRAELI THRUST ACROSS THE
CANAL AT DEVERSOIR. SHAZLI HAD NOT ACTED FOR THREE DAYS
FOLLOWING THE CROSSING, APPARENTLY BELIEVING THAT THE IDF
HAD PUT NO MORE THAN A FEW TANKS AND SOME LIGHT FORCES
ONTO THE WEST BANK. SHAZLI'S PLAN HAD BEEN TO PERMIT THESE
IDF "ELEMENTS" TO MOVE DEEPLY INTO EGYPT, THEN SURROUND AND
DESTROY THEM. YEDRASHNIKOV SAID THAT SHAZLI'S DEPARTURE
HAD BEEN EXPECTED SINCE THE END OF THE CEASEFIRE. (COMMENT:
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HE ALSO STATED THIS TO USINTOFF THREE DAYS BEFORE SHAZLI

WAS REMOVED; HE COMMENTED IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD THAT HE HAD NOT EXPECTED THE CHANGE TO COME SO SOON). YEDRASHNIKOV ADDED THAT ANOTHER POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE REORGANIZATION WAS SADAT'S DESIRE TO REMOVE ANY OFFICER WHO MIGHT, FOLLOWING A SETTLEMENT, CAPITALIZE ON HIS WAR REPUTATION FOR POLITICAL ENDS. HE SAW SUPPORT FOR THIS VIEW IN THE REMOVAL OF THE SECOND AND THIRD ARMY COMMANDERS.

2. COMMENTING ON EGYPTIAN ARMY ATTITUDES, YEDRASHNIKOV SAID "THEY ARE THE SAME AS SADAT'S." HE SAID THAT SHAZLI'S DEPARTURE AND THE SIMULTANEOUS CHANGES IN THE MILITARY COMMAND LEFT NO ONE WHO COULD POSE A REALISTIC CHALLENGE OR PLACE POLITICAL PRESSURE ON THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT. THE ARMY NOW STOOD AT HIS BIDDING.

3. ASKED IF THERE WERE SOVIET MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THE FIELD IN EGYPT, YEDRASHNIKOV SAID THAT THERE WERE SOME TECHNICAL PERSONNEL ASSISTING IN THE INSTALLATION AND SUPPORT OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILE SYSTEMS, BUT THESE HAD BEEN IN EGYPT FOR MONTHS.

4. QADHAAFI. YEDRASHNIKOV, IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, REMARKED THAT IF THE LIBYAN RCC EVER DECIDED TO DISPENSE WITH QADHAAFI, JALLUD WOULD BE THE MOST LIKELY SUCCESSOR. HE WAS A PRACTICAL POLITICIAN AND, MOREOVER, HAD THE SUPPORT OF EGYPT. YEDRASHNIKOV STATED THAT FOLLOWING THE ATTEMPTED MARCH OF LIBYANS INTO EGYPT IN JULY, JALLUD HAD COME TO CAIRO TO SMOOTH OVER THE EGYPTIANS' FEELINGS. AT THIS TIME JALLUD HAD OBTAINED SADAT'S AGREEMENT THAT, SHOULD THE RCC REMOVE QADHAAFI OR ACCEPT HIS RESIGNATION, HE WOULD HAVE EGYPT'S SUPPORT. YEDRASHNIKOV SAID THAT HE PRESUMED THIS UNDERSTANDING STILL HELD. HE DOUBTED THAT EGYPT WOULD TAKE ANY ACTION TO EFFECT A CHANGE IN THE LIBYAN LEADERSHIP,

SINCE THIS KIND OF INITIATIVE WAS TOO DANGEROUS AND TOO LIKELY TO BACKFIRE.

5. YEDRASHNIKOV ACKNOWLEDGED THAT STORIES OF ANOTHER CHANGE IN THE EGYPTIAN CABINET SEEMED TO BE ON THE INCREASE. HE SAID THAT MANY EGYPTIANS BELIEVED THE CHANGE WOULD BE CONFIDENTIAL

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GRADUAL AND WOULD PRIMARILY AFFECT THE TECHNICAL MINISTRIES, SUCH AS AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND IRRIGATION. THESE SOURCES HAD ALSO MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY OF SAYYID MAR'I BEING GIVEN THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP, ALTHOUGH MINISTER OF INFORMATION HATEM WAS ALSO SUGGESTED FOR THIS POSITION.
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